

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE  
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES, HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. JAMES  
ALIX MICHEL

*Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, 26 August 2015*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Your Excellency this evening. Your State Visit, following the landmark visit of India's Prime Minister to Seychelles earlier this year, is a reiteration of the high importance that our Governments attach to strengthening our strategic partnership.

Excellency,

The close bonds of friendship between India and Seychelles have stood the test of time. For the past four decades, since the independence of Seychelles, we have worked together to achieve our common goals of development and growth. We have joined hands to face common challenges, addressed regional and global issues, overcome adversities and celebrated our successes. The participation of an Indian Navy contingent in your National Day Parade this year was not only an honour to India but also a manifestation of our shared sentiments.

Mr. President, we laud your vision for Seychelles and your efforts to revitalize its growth and development. The economic reforms undertaken by you, the expansion and diversification of your economy and your simultaneous focus on social welfare have shown splendid results. Seychelles now stands among the countries recognised by the World Bank as High Income Group Countries. We welcome your accession to the World Trade Organisation and congratulate you on your being ranked by the UNDP as the country with the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest Human Development Index in Africa in the year 2014.

Your efforts for the development of the concept of "Blue Economy for Sustainable Development" and your commitment to the issues of the Small Island Developing States find resonance and support in India. With our long coastline, numerous small islands and significant reliance on the oceanic climate system, we, in India, face similar challenges. I am confident that the agreements that our Governments have signed and new areas of co-operation that we have identified during your visit will further strengthen our partnership – which already is an example of

mutually beneficial, South-South Cooperation. Our Protocol on co-operation in the field of Blue Economy is a major step in the conservation and sustainable use of Indian Ocean resources. We are glad that our maritime security co-operation has been fruitful. The operationalisation of the Coastal Surveillance and Radar System will further contribute to securing your maritime territory. The increased air connectivity between Mahe and Mumbai will promote tourist flows in both directions and help to intensify business contacts and enhance bilateral trade and investment. India is committed to extending our support and assistance to Seychelles in areas prioritised by your Government.

Excellency, our traditional linkages and cultural affinities are at the core of our strategic convergence at multilateral fora. We greatly appreciate the support that we have received from you for our candidature for permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council. In this 70<sup>th</sup> year of the United Nations, UNSC reform and expansion will be discussed at the UNGA – for which an intergovernmental negotiating text has been introduced. We look forward to working with you for a constructive outcome.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that India remains deeply committed to its partnership with Africa. This is exemplified by the India-Africa Forum Summits which began in 2008. India will be hosting the 3rd Summit of the Forum in October this year. We expect the Summit to result in new ideas for enhancing the socio-economic development of our peoples. We look forward to your participation in the Summit.

With these words, Mr. President, I once again welcome you and the distinguished members of your delegation and wish you a very productive and enjoyable visit.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I request you to join me in raising a toast to:

- the health and well-being of His Excellency, President James Alix Michel;
- the continued progress and prosperity of the Republic of Seychelles; and
- the enduring friendship between the people of India and the friendly people of Seychelles.